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LETTER DATED 22 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 21 February 1999 from Mr. Tariq Aziz, Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, giving details of the fresh incursion into northern Iraq carried out by the Turkish armed forces and calling on you to do your utmost to urge the Turkish Government to observe the norms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in international law by withdrawing its armed forces from Iraq's territory forthwith.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 21 February 1999 from the Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

Further to my letter dated 9 November 1998 addressed to you (S/1998/1049, annex), I should like to call your attention to the fact that on 17 February 1999 units of the Turkish armed forces supported by fighter aircraft and helicopters carried out a fresh incursion into northern Iraq by way of the Ibrahim al-Khalil crossing and through the Rabkah area north-east of Zakho and surrounding areas as far as the Iraq-Iran-Turkey tripoint. This incursion has caused serious losses in terms of lives and property to Iraqi citizens among our Kurdish people in the area, to say nothing of the damage done to public property. In a statement made on 17 February 1999, Turkish Prime Minister Bûlent Ecevit confirmed this incursion and reiterated the same pretexts previously given by the Turkish Government to justify these open acts of aggression against Iraq, as exemplified by that alleging the pursuit of groups that pose a threat to Turkish national security.

The Government of Iraq condemns in the strongest terms this violation of its territory and airspace by the Turkish armed forces, and it calls upon the Turkish Government to withdraw its invading forces from Iraqi territory forthwith and to desist from any repetition of practices that are incompatible with relations of good neighbourliness and the principles of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations. The Government of Iraq further rejects outright the pretexts advanced by Turkey to justify such operations, given that the alleged pursuit of elements that pose a threat to Turkish national security does not make it legitimate for it to implement a policy that is entirely at odds with Turkey's declared commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

Turkey's distress is fundamentally due to the persistence of the anomalous situation that was created by the United States and the United Kingdom in the area in cooperation with the Government of Turkey itself.

The Government of Iraq reserves the right to seek compensation for the damage caused by these unlawful actions, it renews its call to the Government of Turkey to put a halt to operations that violate Iraq's sovereignty and place its security and integrity in great jeopardy, and it urges Turkey to give concrete expression to its professed respect for the norms of good neighbourliness between States. As I express the hope that the United Nations will fulfil its responsibilities as stipulated in the Charter and will prevent the constant intimidation and aggression to which my country is being subjected, I request you to do your utmost to urge the Turkish Government to observe the norms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in international law by withdrawing its armed forces from Iraq's territory forthwith.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tariq AZIZ
Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Iraq